and Ordnance Factories in meeting their requirements of raw materials, components, sub-assemblies, spares etc. for production of defence equipment. The defence industry sector was opened for Indian private sector participation in May 2001. So far, 29 Letters of Intent/Industrial Licences have been issued to various private sector companies for production of a wide range of defence items.

Erosion in combat squadrons of IAF

747. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
DR. PRABHA THAKUR:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the strength of IAF has eroded significantly to only 28 combat squadrons, as against the sancitoned strength of 39 squadrons;

(b) whether it is also a fact that only one-third of the upgraded MIG-21 Bisons are operating and two squadrons of MIG-29 have been grounded; if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that HAL has not been able to meet the qualitative and quantitative requirements of IAF, in supplying spare and assembled aircrafts; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken to increase the combat preparedness of IAF?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) HAL has been providing adequate product support. However, on few occasions, the quantitative requirements of IAF have not been met by HAL.

(d) Quality control measures, joint consultative mechanism between IAF and HAL and warranty against defective components are some of the steps taken to meet the qualitative and quantitative requirements of IAF. Further, Government constantly review the security environment and accordingly decide to induct appropriate equipment and to make other arrangements for adequate combat preparedness.